

Georgian language

Georgian (ქართული ენა, *romanized:* *kartuli ena*, pronounced [kʰɑrtʰuli ɛnɑ]) is a Kartvelian language spoken by Georgians. It is the official language of Georgia. Georgian is written in its own writing system, the Georgian script. Georgian is the literary language for all regional subgroups of Georgians, including those who speak other Kartvelian languages: Svans, Mingrelians and the Laz.

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Georgian	
Kartuli	
ქართული	
 <div>Kartuli written in Georgian script</div>	
Pronunciation	[kʰɑrtʰuli ɛnɑ]
Region	Georgia (including Abkhazia and South Ossetia)
<div>Native speakers</div>	3.7 million (2014) ^[1]
<div>Language family</div>	<div>Kartvelian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karto-Zan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Georgian</div>
Early form	Old Georgian
Dialects	Georgian dialects
Writing system	Georgian script <div>Georgian Braille</div>
Official status	
<div>Official language in</div>	 Georgia
Regulated by	Cabinet of Georgia
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	ka (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=ka)
ISO 639-2	geo (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=158) (B) <div>kat (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langco</div>

Classification

Georgian is the most prevalent of the Kartvelian languages, a family that also includes Svan and Megrelian (chiefly spoken in Northwest Georgia) and Laz (chiefly spoken along the Black Sea coast of Turkey, from Melyat, Rize, to the Georgian frontier).

Dialects

Dialects of Georgian are from Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Guria, Adjara, Imerkhevi (in Turkey), Kartli, Kakheti, Saingilo (in Azerbaijan), Tusheti, Khevsureti, Khevi, Pshavi, Fereydun Shahr (in Iran), Mtiuleti and Meskheti.

History

The history of the Georgian language can conventionally be divided into:^[3]

- Early Old Georgian: 5th–8th centuries
- Classical Old Georgian: 9th–11th centuries
- Middle Georgian: 11th/12th–17th/18th centuries
- Modern Georgian: 17th/18th century – present

Georgian shares an ancestral language with Mingrelian/Laz and Svan. Georgian as separate from the other Kartvelian languages would have emerged in the 1st millennium BC in the area known later as the Kingdom of Iberia. A multidisciplinary team (Mayor et al 2014) suggested that some of the seemingly nonsense inscriptions on the early Classical Athenian vases associated with depictions of Scythians and Amazons might have been written in ancient Georgian, thus representing the earliest written evidence for that language.^[4] The idea has been dismissed by Kassian as "improbable".^[5] The earliest allusion to spoken Georgian may be a passage of the Roman grammarian Marcus Cornelius Fronto in the 2nd century: Fronto imagines the Iberians addressing the emperor Marcus Aurelius in their "incomprehensible tongue".^[6]

The evolution of Georgian into a written language was a consequence of the conversion of the Georgian elite to Christianity in the mid-4th century. The new literary language was constructed on an already well-established cultural infrastructure, appropriating the functions, conventions, and status of Aramaic, the literary language of pagan Georgia, and the new national religion.^[3] The first Georgian texts are inscriptions and palimpsests dating to the 5th century. Georgian has a rich literary tradition. The oldest surviving literary work in Georgian is the 5th century *Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik* (წამებაჲ წმიდისა შუშანიკისი დედოფლისაჲ) by Iakob Tsurtaveli.

In the 11th century, Old Georgian gives rise to **Middle Georgian**, the literary language of the medieval kingdom of Georgia. The Georgian national epic, Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (ვეფხისტყაოსანი), dates from the 12th century.

In 1629, *Alphabetum Ibericum sive Georgianum cum Oratione* and *Dittionario giorgiano e italiano* were the first two books printed in the Georgian language using movable type in Rome supported by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples of the Catholic Church for their evangelical movement in Georgian kingdoms. This marked the beginning of the modern Georgian language.

	<code>des_name.php?code_ID=158</code>) (T)
ISO 639-3	kat
Glottolog	nuc11302 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nuc11302) ^[2]
Linguasphere	42-CAB-baa – bac

Phonology

Consonants

Symbols on the left are those of the IPA and those on the right are of the modern Georgian alphabet.

Georgian consonants^{[7][8]}

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental/Alveolar</u>	<u>Post-alveolar</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Uvular</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasal</u>		m ო	n ნ				
<u>Stop</u>	<u>aspirated</u>	p ^h ფ	t ^h თ		k ^h ქ		
	<u>voiced</u>	b ბ	d დ		g გ		
	<u>ejective</u>	p' პ'	t' ტ'		k' კ'	q' ყ	
<u>Affricate</u>	(<u>aspirated</u>)		ts ^h 1 ც	tʃ ^h ჩ			
	<u>voiced</u>		dz დ	dʒ ჯ			
	<u>ejective</u>		ts' ც'	tʃ' ჟ			
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless</u>		s ს	ʃ შ	x ² ხ		h ჰ
	<u>voiced</u>	v ვ	z ზ	ʒ ჳ	ɣ ² ჳ		
<u>Vibrant</u>			r რ				
<u>Lateral</u>			l ლ				

1. Opinions differ on the aspiration of /ts^h, tʃ^h/, as it is non-contrastive.^[8]
2. Opinions differ on how to classify /x/ and /ɣ/; Aronson (1990) classifies them as post-velar, Hewitt (1995) argues that they range from velar to uvular according to context.

Former /q^h/ (ჟ) has merged with /x/ (ხ), leaving only the latter.

The glottalization of the ejectives is rather light, and in many romanization systems it is not marked, for transcriptions such as ejective *p*, *t*, *ts*, *ch*, *k* and *q*, against aspirated *p'*, *t'*, *ts'*, *ch'* and *k'* (as in transcriptions of Armenian).

The coronal occlusives (/t^h t' d n/, not necessarily affricates) are variously described as apical dental, laminal alveolar, and "dental".^[7]

Vowels

Vowels^[9]

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i ო	u უ
<u>Mid</u>	ε ე	ɔ მ
<u>Open</u>	a~ɑ ა	ɤ ^[10] ე

Prosody

Prosody in Georgian involves stress, intonation, and rhythm. Stress is very weak, and linguists disagree as to where stress occurs in words.^[11] Jun, Vicenik, and Lofstedt have proposed that Georgian stress and intonation are the result of pitch accents on the first syllable of a word and near the end of a phrase.^[12] The rhythm of Georgian speech is syllable-timed.^[13]

Phonotactics

Georgian contains many "harmonic clusters" involving two consonants of a similar type (voiced, aspirated, or ejective) which are pronounced with only a single release; e.g. ბგერა *bgera* (sound), ცხოვრება *tskhovreba* (life), and წყალი *ts'q'ali* (water).^[14] There are also frequent consonant clusters, sometimes involving more than six consonants in a row, as may be seen in words like გვერცევენი *gvprtskvni* ("You peel us") and მწვრთნელი *mts'vrtneli* ("trainer").

Vicenik has observed that Georgian vowels following ejective stops have creaky voice and suggests this may be one cue distinguishing ejectives from their aspirated and voiced counterparts.^[15]

Writing system

Georgian has been written in a variety of scripts over its history. Currently the Mkhedruli or "Military" script is almost completely dominant; the others are used mostly in religious documents and architecture.

Mkhedruli has 33 letters in common use; a half dozen more are obsolete in Georgian, though still used in other alphabets, like Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan. The letters of *Mkhedruli* correspond closely to the phonemes of the Georgian language.

According to the traditional account written down by Leonti Mroveli in the 11th century, the first Georgian script was created by the first ruler of the Kingdom of Iberia, Pharnavaz, in the 3rd century BC. However, the first examples of a Georgian script date from the 5th century AD. There are now three Georgian scripts, called *Asomtavruli* "capitals", *Nuskhuri* "small letters", and *Mkhedruli*. The first two are used together as upper and lower case in the writings of the Georgian Orthodox Church and together are called *Khutsuri* "priests' [alphabet]".

In *Mkhedruli*, there is no case. Sometimes, however, a capital-like effect, called *Mtavruli*, "title" or "heading", is achieved by modifying the letters so that their vertical sizes are identical and they rest on the baseline with no descenders. These capital-like letters are often used in page headings, chapter titles, monumental inscriptions, and the like.



Road sign in Mtavruli and Latin scripts



"Mshrali khidi" (dry bridge) bilingual construction signboard in Georgian (Mtavruli) and Italian in Tbilisi.

Modern Georgian alphabet

Letter	National transcription	IPA transcription
ა	a	ɑ
ბ	b	b
გ	g	g
დ	d	d
ე	e	ɛ
ვ	v	v
ზ	z	z
თ	t	tʰ
ი	i	i
კ	k'	kʰ
ლ	l	l
მ	m	m
ნ	n	n
ო	o	ɔ
პ	p'	pʰ
ჟ	zh	ʒ
რ	r	r
ს	s	s
ტ	t'	tʰ
უ	u	u
ფ	p	pʰ
ქ	k	kʰ
ყ	gh	ɣ
ღ	q'	qʰ
შ	sh	ʃ
ჩ	ch	tʃʰ
ც	ts	t͡sʰ
ძ	dz	d͡z
წ	ts'	t͡sʰ
ჭ	ch'	tʃʰ
ხ	kh	x
ჯ	j	d͡ʒ

ჰ	h	h
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Keyboard layout

This is the Georgian standard^[16] keyboard layout. The standard Windows keyboard is essentially that of manual typewriters.

“ ”	<u>1</u> !	<u>2</u> ?	<u>3</u> №	<u>4</u> §	<u>5</u> %	<u>6</u> :	<u>7</u> ;	<u>8</u> ;	<u>9</u> ,	<u>0</u> /	- _	+ =	← Backspace	
Tab key	ლ	ჯ	უ	კ	ც	ც	ბ	გ	მ	წ	ძ	ბ	ც) (
Caps lock	ფ	ძ	ც	ც	თ	ა	კ	რ	ო	ლ	დ	ქ	Enter key ↵	
Shift key ↑	ჭ	ჩ	ყ	ს	შ	ნ	ო	ქ	ბ	ჰ	ჰ	Shift key ↑		
Control key	Win key	Alt key	Space bar							AltGr key	Win key	Menu key	Control key	

Grammar

Morphology

Georgian is an agglutinative language. There are certain prefixes and suffixes that are joined together in order to build a verb. In some cases, there can be up to eight different morphemes in one verb at the same time. An example can be *ageshenebinat* ("you (pl) should have built (it)"). The verb can be broken down to parts: *a-g-e-shen-eb-in-a-t*. Each morpheme here contributes to the meaning of the verb tense or the person who has performed the verb. The verb conjugation also exhibits polypersonalism; a verb may potentially include morphemes representing both the subject and the object.

Morphophonology

In Georgian morphophonology, syncope is a common phenomenon. When a suffix (especially the plural suffix *-eb-*) is attached to a word which has either of the vowels *a* or *e* in the last syllable, this vowel is, in most words, lost. For example, *megobari* means "friend". To say "friends", one says, *megobØrebi* (*megobrebi*), with the loss of *a* in the last syllable of the word root.

Inflection

Georgian has seven noun cases: nominative, ergative, dative, genitive, instrumental, adverbial and vocative. An interesting feature of Georgian is that, while the subject of a sentence is generally in the nominative case, and the object is in the accusative case (or dative), in Georgian, one can find this reversed in many situations (this depends mainly on the character of the verb). This is called the dative construction. In the past tense of the transitive verbs, and in the present tense of the verb "to know", the subject is in the ergative case.

Syntax

- Georgian is a left-branching language, in which adjectives precede nouns, possessors precede possessions, objects normally precede verbs, and postpositions are used instead of prepositions.
- Each postposition (whether a suffix or a separate word) requires the modified noun to be in a specific case. (This is similar to the way prepositions govern specific cases in many Indo-European languages such as German, Latin, or Russian.)
- Georgian is a pro-drop language: both subject and object pronouns are frequently omitted except for emphasis or to resolve ambiguity.
- A study by Skopeteas *et al.* concluded that Georgian word order tends to place the focus of a sentence immediately before the verb, and the topic before the focus. A subject–object–verb (SOV) word order is common in idiomatic expressions and when the focus of a sentence is on the object. A subject–verb–object (SVO) word order is common when the focus is on the subject, or in longer sentences. Object-initial word orders (OSV or OVS) are also possible, but less common. Verb-initial word orders including both subject and object (VSO or VOS) are extremely rare.^[17]
- Georgian has no grammatical gender; even the pronouns are gender-neutral.
- Georgian has no articles. Therefore, for example, "guest", "a guest" and "the guest" are said in the same way. In relative clauses, however, it is possible to establish the meaning of the definite article through use of some particles.

Vocabulary

Georgian has a rich word-derivation system. By using a root, and adding some definite prefixes and suffixes, one can derive many nouns and adjectives from the root. For example, from the root *-kartv-*, the following words can be derived: *Kartveli* (a Georgian person), *Kartuli* (the Georgian language) and *Sakartvelo* (Georgia).

Most Georgian surnames end in *-dze* ("son") (Western Georgia), *-shvili* ("child") (Eastern Georgia), *-ia* (Western Georgia, Samegrelo), *-ani* (Western Georgia, Svaneti), *-uri* (Eastern Georgia), etc. The ending *-eli* is a particle of nobility, equivalent to French *de*, German *von* or Polish *-ski*.

Georgian has a vigesimal numeric system like Basque or French, based on the counting system of 20. In order to express a number greater than 20 and less than 100, first the number of 20s in the number is stated and the remaining number is added. For example, 93 is expressed as *ოთხმოცდაცამეტი* - *otkh-m-ots-da-tsamet'i* (lit. four-times-twenty-and-thirteen).

One of the most important Georgian dictionaries is the *Explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language* (Georgian: ქართული ენის განმარტებითი ლექსიკონი). It consists of eight volumes and about 115,000 words. It was produced between 1950 and 1964, by a team of linguists under the direction of Arnold Chikobava.

Examples

Word formations

Georgian has a word derivation system, which allows the derivation of nouns from verb roots both with prefixes and suffixes, for example:

- From the root *-ts'er-* ("write"), the words *ts'erili* ("letter") and *mts'erali* ("writer") are derived.
- From the root *-tsa-* ("give"), the word *gadatsema* ("broadcast") is derived.

- From the root *-tsda-* ("try"), the word *gamotsda* ("exam") is derived.
- From the root *-gav-* ("resemble"), the words *msgavsi* ("similar") and *msgavseba* ("similarity") are derived.
- From the root *-shen-* ("build"), the word *shenoba* ("building") is derived.
- From the root *-tskh-* ("bake"), the word *namtskhvari* ("cake") is derived.
- From the root *-tsiv-* ("cold"), the word *matsivari* ("refrigerator") is derived.
- From the root *-pr-* ("fly"), the words *tvitmprinavi* ("plane") and *aprena* ("take-off") are derived.

It is also possible to derive verbs from nouns:

- From the noun *-omi-* ("war"), the verb *omob* ("wage war") is derived.
- From the noun *-sadili-* ("lunch"), the verb *sadilob* ("eat lunch") is derived.
- From the noun *-sauzme* ("breakfast"), the verb *ts'asauzmeba* ("eat a little breakfast") is derived; the preverb *ts'a-* in Georgian could add the meaning "VERBing a little".
- From the noun *-sakhli-* ("home"), the verb *gadasakhleba* (the infinite form of the verb "to relocate, to move") is derived.

Likewise, verbs can be derived from adjectives, for example:

- From the adjective *-ts'iteli-* ("red"), the verb *gats'itleba* (the infinite form of both "to blush" and "to make one blush") is derived. This kind of derivation can be done with many adjectives in Georgian.
- From the adjective *-brma* ("blind"), the verbs *dabrmaveba* (the infinite form of both "to become blind" and "to blind someone") are derived.
- From the adjective *-lamazi-* ("beautiful"), the verb *galamazeba* (the infinite form of the verb "to become beautiful") is derived.

Words that begin with multiple consonants

In Georgian many nouns and adjectives begin with two or more contiguous consonants. This is because most syllables in the language begin with certain two consonants.

- Some examples of words that begin with double consonants are:
 - წყალი, (*ts'q'ali*), "water"
 - სწორი, (*sts'ori*), "correct"
 - რძე, (*rdze*), "milk"
 - თმა, (*tma*), "hair"
 - მთა, (*mta*), "mountain"
 - ცხენი, (*tskheni*), "horse"
- There are also many words that begin with three contiguous consonants:
 - თქვენ, (*tkven*), "you (plural)"
 - მწვანე, (*mts'vane*), "green"
 - ცხვირი, (*tskhviri*), "nose"
 - ტკბილი, (*t'k'bili*), "sweet"
 - მტკივნეული, (*mt'k'ivneuli*), "painful"

- ჩრდილოეთი, (*chrdiloeti*), "north"
- There are also a few words in Georgian that begin with four contiguous consonants. Examples are:
 - მკვლელი, (*mk'vleli*), "murderer"
 - მკვდარი, (*mk'vdari*), "dead"
 - მთვრალი, (*mtvrali*), "drunk"
 - მწკრივი; (*mts'k'rivi*), "row"
- There can also be some extreme cases in Georgian. For example, the following word begins with *six* contiguous consonants:
 - მწვრთნელი, (*mts'vrtneli*), "trainer"
- And the following words begin with *eight* consonants:
 - გვფრცქვნი (*gvprtskvni*), "you peel us"
 - გვბრღვნი (*gvbrdghvni*), "you tear us"
 - გვრწვრთნი (*gvrts'vrtni*), "you train us"

Language example

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Georgian:

ყველა ადამიანი იბადება თავისუფალი და თანასწორი თავისი ღირსებითა და უფლებებით. მათ მინიჭებული აქვთ გონება და სინდისი და ერთმანეთის მიმართ უნდა იქცეოდნენ ძმობის სულისკვეთებით.

▪ Transliteration:

q'vela adamiani ibadeba tavisupali da tanasts'ori tavis ghirsebita da uplebebit. mat minich'ebuli akvt goneba da sindisi da ertmanetis mimart unda iktseodnen dzmobis sulisk'vetebit.

▪ Translation:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.^[18]

See also

- Old Georgian
- Georgian dialects
- Georgian alphabet
- Georgian calligraphy
- Georgian calendar
- Georgian grammar
- Georgian numerals
- Georgian profanity

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- Vicenik, Chad (2010), "An acoustic study of Georgian stop consonants" (<https://zenodo.org/record/890293>), *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, **40** (1): 59–92, doi:10.1017/s0025100309990302 (<https://doi.org/10.1017%2Fs0025100309990302>)
- Skopeteas, Stavros; Féry, Caroline; Asatiani, Rusudan (2009), *Word order and intonation in Georgian*, University of Potsdam

External links

- Dryer, Matthew S.; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2013). "Georgian language" (http://wals.info/lang_roid/lect/wals_code_geo). *World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Georgian language (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=geo>)

Grammars

- Reference grammar of Georgian by Howard Aronson (SEELRC, Duke University) (http://www.seelrc.org:8080/grammar/pdf/stand_alone_georgian.pdf)
- Georgian Grammar (<http://learn101.org/georgian.php>)

Dictionaries

- Georgian English, English Georgian online dictionary (<http://www.translate.ge>)
- English-Georgian, German-Georgian and Russian-Georgian dictionaries (http://czudovo.info/list.php?what=1&ln=ka&in=from_en)
- English-Georgian HTML Dictionary (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070122120120/http://www.georgianweb.com/language/dictionary/index.html>)
- Georgian Swadesh list of basic vocabulary words (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Georgian_Swadesh_list) (from Wiktionary's Swadesh-list appendix (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Georgian_Swadesh_list))

Software

- Georgian fonts, compliant with Unicode 4.0, also available for MAC OS 9 or X (<http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/unicode/tituut.asp>)
- A keyboard for typing georgian characters for firefox (<https://addons.mozilla.org/firefox/addon/10573>)
- Learn Georgian Alphabet Now app (<https://itunes.apple.com/app/learn-georgian-alphabet-now/id1182898652?mt=8>) Gives the name, pronunciation of each letter, and example words. Shows the stroke order of each letter. Permits drawing practice and has a quiz to learn the letters.

Literature and culture

- About Georgia - Language and Alphabet (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120227084408/http://www.aboutgeorgia.ge/language/>)
- Summer School of Georgian at Tbilisi State University (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070930020817/http://www.kartvfund.org.ge/page3.html>)
- Learn how to write Georgian hand-written letters correctly (http://georgian-language.com/learn_georgian/write.php)

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